

1790

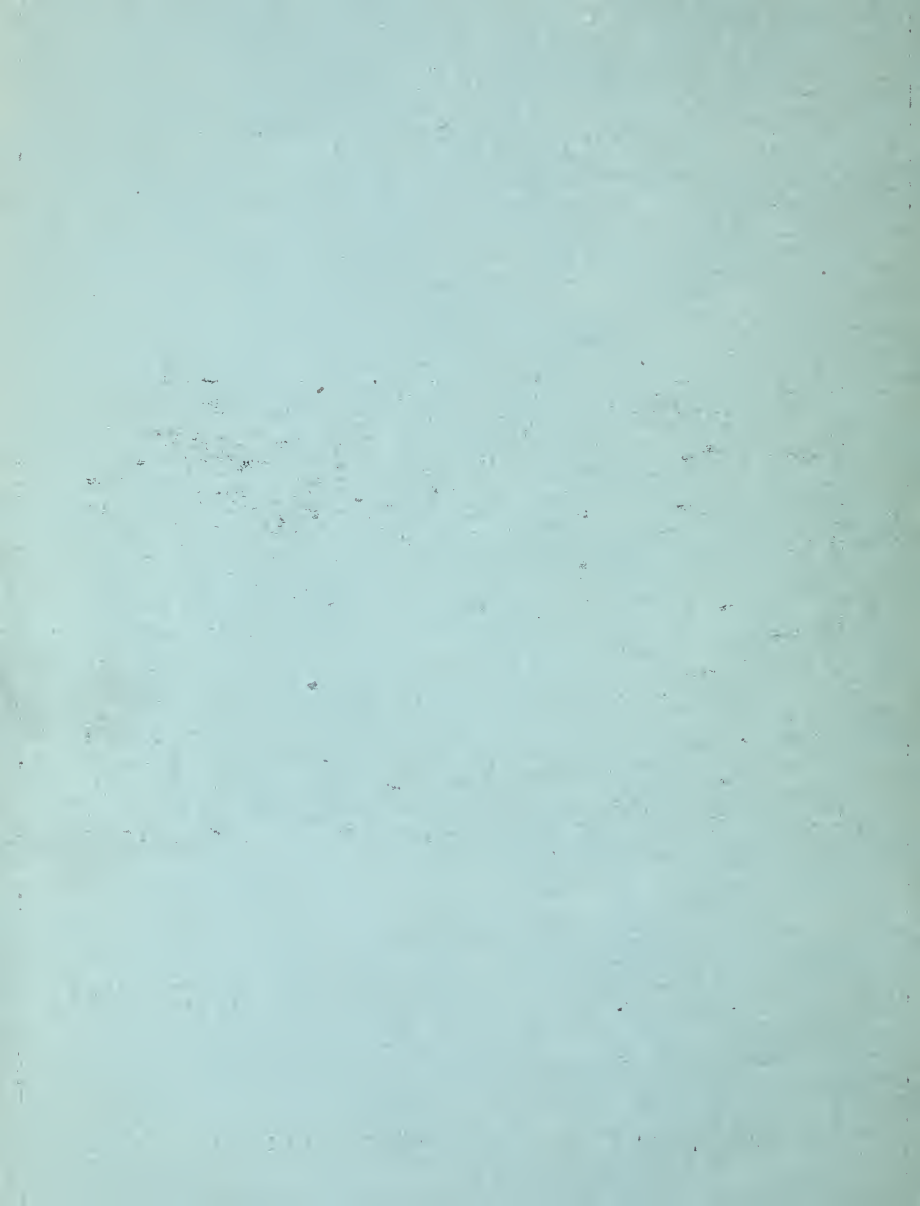
1930

THE
ONE HUNDRED AND FORTIETH
ANNIVERSARY



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WEST ALEXANDER, PENNSYLVANIA



1790 - - - - 1930

T H E

1 4 0 T H A N N I V E R S A R Y

o f

T H E P R E S B Y T E R I A N C H U R C H

o f

W E S T A L E X A N D E R , P E N N S Y L V A N I A

October 8, 1930

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today,
yea and forever."

INTRODUCTION

Anniversaries are fine times to accomplish certain ends. For those who have long been a part of this church, this 140th Anniversary will be a time of joy and thanksgiving to God for His blessings; also a time when blessed memories are recalled. For the youth and newer members of the congregation, the occasion will surely impress upon them the heritage that is theirs, and will lead us, one and all, to desire that the days that shall come shall be "stronger in righteousness and more fruitful and beautiful in goodness."

The history of the last forty years, with a brief summary of that prepared at the Centennial, has been written at the direction of the Anniversary Committee, (R. D. McGleery, E. H. Lamb, Carson Reed, Miss Essie Lester and Mrs. Edward Blayney).

Due to the fact that Dr. Lester was historian at the time of the 100th Anniversary, and his daughter, Miss Essie Lester, has written this of the last forty years, the work of Dr. Lester has not received due consideration. Although thirty years have elapsed since his active pastorate, his name is still on the lips of those who knew and loved him as their pastor and friend. His ministry has made an impression upon the community which will be remembered for many years to come. We pay him tribute today, and pray that the church he served so long and devotedly may continue to be a faithful witness to her Lord in future years.

G. K. Monroe, Pastor

September, 1930

HISTORICAL SKETCH

By Miss Essie E. Lester.

The words of Israel's great statesman and law-giver are in our minds today. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations", for God is written large in the annals of this church. The 100th anniversary recounted to the world God's dealings with us, His goodness, and His guidance. At this 140th milestone, we again desire to raise our Ebenezer, not with pride in our achievements, but to show how He has worked through us, His prized possession, - "not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name, be all the praise and glory."

The 100th anniversary was observed in the pastorate of the Rev. William Havens Lester, D.D. From his history many interesting facts of "ye ancient days" may be gathered, a few of which we give briefly.

In travelling through the country in 1788, Col. May records the following in his diary: "In the day's ride I saw something like a sentry box standing on four posts near the roadside." This box or pulpit was under the oak tree still standing in the graveyard. There the pioneers brought their Psalm Book and Bible for devotion, and their rifles for protection against the Indians.

It was generally believed that Dr. John McMillan preached the first sermon and organized the church. Redstone, the first Presbytery west of the mountains records that a Mr. Dodd was appointed to preach at Three Ridges in 1785. The Rev. John Brice was the first pastor - 1790, - and regular preaching services were not held until his pastorate.

Between 1790 and 1795, a division in the church is recorded. Rouse's version of the Psalms was used in praise. It was noised abroad that Mr. Brice had

used Watts' Psalms at family worship. On Sabbath, he publicly acknowledged the truth and lined out and sang the Psalm. Those opposed to using "human compositions" in Divine Worship rose and left the church forming the Associate Church, now known as the United Presbyterian Church. At this time the question arose as to who should own the property. It was decided by arbitration that the Presbyterian Church should hold the property, paying the Associate Church \$40 in six months. This was duly signed by the trustees and arbiters of the two congregations, and the spirit of Christian forbearance noted by the historian.

The pastoral labors of Mr. Brice included the churches of Three Ridges and the Forks of Wheeling. The tendency of this church has been to plain gospel doctrines based on the Bible and the Westminster Confession. The hard experiences of the early settlers, their simplicity of living like Holland's Puritan, shut them up to a stern theology and experience intensely real.

The great revival sweeping over the churches at the beginning of this century, known as the "Falling Work of Grace" is mentioned by the historian.

1809-1826. Mr. Brice resigned in 1808, and the Rev. Joseph Stevenson was called. In 1812 he was released from his duties at the Forks of Wheeling Church and gave his whole time to Three Ridges. In 1815 he had the church incorporated under that name. In 1849 it was changed to that of West Alexander.

Following the resignation of Mr. Stevenson, the church was without a pastor for three years.

1828-1854. The flock was widely scattered when Dr. McCluskey was called in 1828. He threw himself into the pastoral work. From pulpit and from pew he taught cleanliness, good manners, and religion.

In 1848, the church was divided on the slavery question, and an organization effected by those who went out known as the Free Presbyterian Church of West

Alexander.

A sketch of this church would not be complete without mentioning its educational interests. Dr. McCluskey saw great need and opened a select school in the basement of the church. A charter obtained in 1840. Able instructors were secured. The school, having done its work, ceased in 1879. About sixty from this school have entered the gospel ministry, (largely Presbyterian) and many others the so called "learned professions".

The historian says that the church in giving her sons has not withheld her daughters, and he gives a list of these as well as those who have gone into the ministry. He was called to the church in 1854. He speaks of a happy helpful marriage, of an able eldership. of blessed revivals, and of the educational work in which he delighted, and adds characteristically, "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger and not thy own lips."

1890-1930

In answer to prayer able and godly men have gone in and out before this people, men who have held in reverence the dignity of their profession, and the waves of influence they have set in motion can be reckoned only by eternity.

1854-1900. Dr. Lester resigned this pastorate in 1900. He was elected Pastor Emeritus, and for twelve years went about doing good, until he was called up higher. The first pastor and his wife, and Dr. Lester and his wife rest among their beloved people, waiting with them a glorious resurrection.

1900-1909. The Rev. Grant E. Fisher, D.D. like his predecessor was a Presbyterian, dyed in the wool. Dr. Fisher was an able sermonizer, analytical, logical and pointed, for when he said, "Thou art the man", various sinners squirmed in their seats. Some considered his best work in the pulpit. He speaks as having

especially enjoyed his analytical teaching of the Sunday School Lesson to the teachers class.

In the greatest ingathering during this ministry sixty-three were enrolled in the church, ranging in age from nine to seventy-six. Dr. Fisher remarks that if the history of some of these conversions were known it would make a profound impression. He refers to a certain election day. Trying in vain for three hours to concentrate on sermonizing he obeyed the still small voice that bade him go out and elect some to everlasting life, and that afternoon four were added to the church.

Public prayer by women was fostered and a class of young men taught by the pastor's wife became a force in later years.

Benevolences were largely increased during this pastorate. Dr. Lester's 50th Anniversary was fittingly observed by pastor and people. Mr. W. G. Kiskaddon, a friend of Dr. Fisher, presented to the church a Mason and Hamlin organ, which served well until the pipe organ was installed.

During this ministry the new manse was built, and extensive repairs were made on the church.

In 1909, Dr. Fisher resigned to accept a call to the Westminster Church of Omaha.

1910-1914. The Rev. Howell M. Evans succeeded Dr. Fisher as pastor and was here for four years. He will be remembered for his pleasing personality and unusually good memory, friendly and kind to all, and a good mixer. There were large accessions to the membership at this time. Mr. Evans successfully conducted a community Teacher Training Class. He will be remembered too, for his large lively family of children. His courtesy and consideration for the aged Pastor Emeritus, whose feet were slipping o'er the brink will not soon be forgotten.

1915-1921. The Rev. Henry Alexander Riddle, Jr. followed Mr. Evans. It was felt that we must get a

minister who would influence our young men and boys. Mr. Riddle was the pioneer in introducing new methods and he had a pioneer's courage.

He urged that the church be the center of social as well as religious activity, and with this in view it was thrown open as never before. Boy Scouts were organized and a room in town furnished for their meeting place and recreation. The successful budget system and the rotary eldership were introduced. The pastor found in the last of the old order of eldership, Mr. Wm. Faris Whitham, a good man of fine mind and judgement, a warm supporter, and a true friend.

The urge of the war laid hold of him, and we bade him farewell for a season. Rumor has it that the Buddies held 'Doc Riddle' as they called him, in as high esteem as did we. A friend has described him in today's language as "A fellow's brother". He excelled as a pastor. The sick room opened its doors to him, the dying blessed him, and to the mourner he brought Gods own comfort, this we know.

Of all the ministry he has understood best our feeling for the sacred past and revered it with us. "God of our Fathers, and our Fathers' Fathers", often opened his petitions. He was a historic Presbyterian and a fine Presbyterian.

After six years, Westminster Church of Greensburg called him, and he left us disconsolate, believing that no one could fill his place.

1921-1926. But there came along one who filled his own place, and a dear one, too - the Rev. Glenn M. Crawford.

At this time a great need was felt in the town and community. One rose up to meet it - Mr. William Todd of the old Todd family, eighty-five years old, and member of the famous Todd Band. He organized a band and taught music to the young men and boys, teaching them to play good music. He organized the S.S. Orchestra and a musical revival was the result.

Mr. Crawford organized the boys and girls for

summer camps, enlarging the scope of the D.V.B.S. bulletins were introduced into the church, and the Willing Workers organized for local work, the first and only organization of its kind. The women of the church were enlisted in this, and they can claim a loyalty second to none. They were to Mr. Crawford, and are to Mr. Monroe, "those women who labored with me in the gospel". They equipped the kitchen, and in the new heating system, in redecorating the church and in extensive repairs they bore the greater burden. They bought a piano, and built and furnished the Bible Class room.

Meanwhile the prayer meeting averaged 85. The pastor, a keen and original sermonizer brought beaten oil into the sanctuary. A series of sermons on the 23d Psalm was devotional and uplifting and was much tasted. A series of practical sermons on James was brought home forcibly for the whole counsel of God was declared unto us.

For three years the startling truth was brought home to us in all times and ways. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" and a situation that grieved God and the pastor mended. His exceeding humanness and his keen sense of humor drew him to us, and we revered the greatness of one who ruled his own spirit. He heard and answered the call to Jeannette. Rebelliously we let him go, yet in our hearts we thought that God had still some good thing in store for us.

1927- . We chose the Rev. George Karl Monroe, "It chanced Eternal God that chance did guide." Quietly he came and quietly has worked. "I must work in my own way," he said, and he has worked efficiently and determinedly. The pastor and his wife supervise the Young People's work, personally conduct summer camps, sponsor the D.V.B.S., have brought to bear up-to-date methods and have thoroughly organized all parts of church work. Every effort is preceded by careful

study. A hard worker in every line, he literally and figuratively takes off his coat and shows us how. A personality that must be known to be appreciated. A faithful soldier of the Cross, and a faithful soldier of his country. Said one, in speaking of him, "A Christian man that grows."

The greatest achievement of the year is the new organ and an improved musical program. Without his leadership and determination we could not have accomplished these. As for the organ, the words of John Ridd, in speaking of Lorna Doone, come to mind. "Of Lorna, my joy, my love, I will say nothing. It is unseemly for a man to boast his pride."

Is it any wonder that we look askance at pulpit committees and view with distrust the stranger within our gates? It is whispered among us that we have a godly minister.

It has not been the lot of many churches to have such an able and godly ministry. There has been a steady growth along moral and spiritual lines. Each pastor has had special services and at these times there have been considerable accessions to the church. But the quiet work of the Holy Spirit without special effort has perhaps built the church more securely. These men have ministered to the people, in the pulpit, out of the pulpit. They have wept and rejoiced with the flock. They have visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and have kept themselves unspotted from the world. Gifts differing, but each has done his work, and done it well. It is the joy of the Christian ministry to see plastic lives moulded into symmetry, and the kingdom advanced - but the work is not easy.

In company with Divine Grace, most have had a saving sense of humor, and that has helped. These ministers have seen us grow, and we have seen them grow, too - especially the three young men who were called to the pastorate. Of course we are nice - yes, very nice, but growing pains are hard. We who have evidenc-

ed the discipline, say "Courage". No chastening for the present is joyous, but afterward.

Mr. William Berry, 90 years old, has signed the call for the last two pastors. Our Enoch, he has had the witness borne to him that he is well pleasing unto God, and patiently and longingly he awaits his translation.

This church has always been happy in the pastor's choice of a wife. We have been proud of these loved wives and often the blessing of motherhood has crowned them. Perhaps no greater influence has gone out in these pastorates than from this Christian home. Piety self-denial, forbearance, tact, gentleness, love, and hospitality have flowered in our manse. Traits of mind and body rank these mistresses with royalty. Corra Harris says that they will rank high in the courts of Heaven. We do you reverence for you are worthy.

The eldership of the church has always been of its best material. These have upheld the pastor and served the best interests of the church as they saw it gifts differing of course, but with an eye single to His honor and glory.

The trustees, too, have served efficiently, and the temporal affairs of the church have been well managed. Their office also is rotary.

The Sunday School, handmaid of the church is deeply woven in her history. Those nurtured in the school become the strength and backbone of the church. Time has wrought many changes in this service. Within the past two years departmental work has been introduced and the school thoroughly organized. A library to which from time to time additions are made is part of the equipment. There is an efficient staff of teachers and officers, and the work prospers. No notice of the Sunday School would be complete without mention of the faithful, efficient superintendent for 22 years,

Mr. T. R. Bell, whose devotion to the work was a leading factor in a successful school.

This church from the first has been a missionary church, - systematic benevolences urged from the pulpit, missionary instruction given, sons and daughters dedicated to work at home and abroad, and missionaries received with deference becoming to the ambassadors of the King. Doubtless obedience to His last command has contributed much to the well being of the church. The women of the church have borne a large share in this work. For over 50 years, they have helped in the support of a missionary in China. When one retired or passed over, another took her place. In turn, Mrs. Mary Hicks Shaw, Mrs. Fanny Corbett Hays, and Mrs. Madge Woods Hamilton. The various missionary organizations have always met their apportionment.

Stewardship is especially stressed in this pastorate. In the last year a stewardship reading contest was sponsored by the pastor and successfully carried out. A School of Missions is a regular part of the church program with classes suitable to all ages. Mission study is also taken up in the various societies. The congregational church budget contributes to the support of Dr. Ensign in Utah, and Rev. Homer Weisbecker in Siam. It was our privilege a few weeks since to meet these splendid representatives "face to face", and hear of the work we are helping to carry on through them.

In 1899, John Sill Blayney, D.D., son of Capt. and Mrs. David Blayney, and of this church, the last young man fitted by Dr. Lester for the ministry, was ordained and installed. He held pastorates in Western Pennsylvania; St. Clairsville, Ohio; Eutchison, Kansas; and Roswell, New Mexico. A loved pastor and an able preacher, he was called away from a family who needed him sorely, in 1917. Sometime we'll understand.

Within these last years two sons of the church

have gone into the gospel ministry.

Lane Lester McCarmon, a fruit of Mr. Riddle's work elsewhere, was ordained in 1923, in this church, expecting to enter the Foreign Field, but ill health prevented. He is now pastor of the New Salem Church at Delmont, Pa.

Jacob Campbell Ruble was ordained and installed in the Pigeon Creek Church in 1926.

Mrs. Lora Chaney Howe labored for some years among the Indians of Alaska. Her husband's failing health made necessary their return to the states. They are now doing a great constructive Christian work in Highland College, Kansas.

Miss Mary Caldwell, who spent some time in teaching in our Missions Schools for Colored People in the South, later married the Rev. Ernest Kendall, now pastor of the Christian Church at McConnellsville, Ohio.

Cordial relations have always been maintained between the churches of this town. As denominational lines widen, the spirit of mutual cooperation has grown. This is ably seconded by the pastors. "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

"Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion." It has always been so. The years have wrought many changes in the personnel of those who lead us in praise. One family for three generations have efficiently rendered this service. The choir leader of many years, Mr. J. F. Sutherland sings His power to save in a nobler sweeter song. The organist of many years, Mrs. Lily Sample, who faithfully and without remuneration filled a hard place, is held in gratitude and respect. And to the many who have freely and gladly rendered this service, we bespeak appreciation perhaps too seldom uttered. This stewardship of praise has been well pleasing to God and to us. They have broken their alabaster box of ointment at His feet, and lo! the fragrance thereof has reached even to high Heaven!

This is a time of precious memories. The pioneers that we never saw are more than names to us. They live today in their descendants who carry on the work of this church. "O may I join the choir invisible, Of the immortal dead, Who live in minds made better by their presence."

Of those who sat in these pews forty years ago, few remain, but methinks our beloved who have entered the higher service look down today, and rejoicing, say with us, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." It has been and is the joy of our Zion to say, "This man and that man was born there." Love and loyalty to the church has placed it above selfish considerations. When as children we sang those words of Timothy Dwight, "I love Thy kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode", it meant to us this dear old church. But even today with broadened understanding our thoughts come back to this place as we sing, "I love Thy church, O God, Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thy eye, and graven on Thy hand."

Ours a godly line of ministry down the years! We seem to see them as they stand in order at the sacred desk, and speak the message that was given them to speak. And as they speak, a presence hovers near. As it comes closer, one by one they fade away, and on our Mount of Transfiguration, "we see no man, save Jesus only," Christ the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Throughout the generations we have sung at the close of Communion services, the Twenty-third Psalm, and through following years even until the end, may that hymn of assurance and praise be raised from this Holy Place.

Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me,
And in God's House forever more
My dwelling place shall be.

APPENDIX

Officers of the Church of West Alexander from its organization until the present time.

PASTORS

Rev. John Brice; installed, 1790; released, 1809.
Rev. Joseph Stevenson; installed, 1809; released, 1825
Rev. John McCluskey, D.D.; installed, 1828; released, 1854
Rev. Wm. H. Lester, D.D.; installed, 1854; released, 1900
Pastor Emeritus, 1900-1912.
Rev. Grant E. Fisher, D.D.; installed, 1900; released, 1909
Rev. H. M. Evans; installed, 1910; released, 1914.
Rev. Henry A. Riddle, Jr.; installed, 1915; released, 1921
Rev. Glenn M. Crawford; installed, 1921; released, 1926
Rev. G. Karl Monroe; installed, 1927

ELDERS

Ordained 1790

John McPherrin

John Maxwell

John Waits

John Faris

Ordained 1800

John Henry

George Sutherland

Silas Coe

William Scott

George Lee

Moses Hull

Ordained 1813

James MacCammon

William Gaston

John Miller

Thomas Byers

Ordained 1819

Thomas Yates

William Hervey

Ordained 1828

John Pollock

John McDonald

Samuel Oldham

Andrew Yates

John Cunningham, M.D.

George Sutherland, 2nd

Thomas Maxwell

Ordained 1847

Barnet Bonar

James Gaston

James Todd

Henry Hervey

Ordained 1853

Fugh Armstrong

Joseph Carson

John Reed

Byers T. Yates

Ordained 1858

John C. Hervey

Ordained 1869
William Armstrong
William Reed
Joel Truesdell
Ordained, 1880
John Reed, 2nd
Alexander McCleery
James F. Blayney
R. Milton Maxwell
Thomas G. Yates
David S. Eagleson, M.D.
Ordained since 1890
Samuel Pollock, 1896
W.F. Whitham, 1896
R.J. McCleery, 1896
Dr. S.A. Craig, 1896
W.S. Armstrong, 1896
D.W. Rasel, 1901
W.L. Blayney, 1901
Nicholas Murray, 1901

R.G. Buchanan, 1901
W.M. Caldwell, 1901
William Berry, 1920
D.W. Coffield, 1920
T.R. Bell, 1920
H.L. McCammon, 1920
Carson Reed, 1921
John M. Gibson, 1921
Leroy Marsh, 1921
W.R. Hamilton, 1921
W.H. Hutchison, 1921
R.D. McCleery, 1922
Carson Blayney, 1922
J. Elmer Gray, 1922
J.H. Chaney, 1924
W.W. Armstrong, 1924
T.E. Egan, 1925
H.H. Lamb, 1927
F.W. Moore, 1928
John Hanna, 1929

140TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

Sunday, October 5th.

Home Coming Day.

Anniversary Sermon by pastor.

Special Address in the evening.

Wednesday, October 8th, 7:30 p.m.

Historical Program.

History of Last Forty Years.

Miss Essie Lester

Messages by former ministers.

Thursday, October 9th.

10:00 a.m. Messages from Sons of the Church

Noon luncheon served at the church.

2:00 p.m. Greetings from visiting and
neighboring ministers.

7:30 p.m. Address by Dr. W.M. Cleaveland,
Synodical Executive Secretary.

Sermon

Communion Service.

